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AFGHANISTAN

Background

The need for humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan has increased significantly in 2010 as a result of ongoing violent conflict, natural disasters, extreme weather and poor infrastructure. These contributing factors have limited effective recovery and development activities. Millions of Afghans, particularly rural populations, women and children, remain chronically vulnerable to food insecurity, forced displacement and lack of access to water, sanitation and hygiene. The economy of Afghanistan has shown little progress in 2010. The lack of economic opportunity, limited access to markets and distribution points, and high unemployment rates compromise livelihoods and leave vulnerable communities highly susceptible to shocks like natural disasters or conflicts.

The security situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate as the number of civilian casualties and attacks on humanitarian aid workers increase. While attacks have occurred predominantly in or near anti-government strongholds, they have also spread to areas that were previously considered more stable. In June 2010, the Government formed a High Peace Council, comprised of senior government and civil society representatives to engage in a dialogue with anti-government elements. The prevailing political environment presents challenges for access, security and government partnerships.

Challenges facing food security and livelihoods

More than 80 percent of the Afghan population relies on agriculture for their livelihoods. Approximately one-third of the population is food insecure and will require agricultural assistance in 2011. The total annual cereal requirement for Afghanistan is estimated at 6.5 million tonnes. After significant commercial importation and humanitarian assistance, there is still a cereal deficit of 753 000 tonnes, almost all of which is for wheat, which is the staple crop of the Afghan population. Despite improved harvests in 2009 and 2010, the agriculture sector in Afghanistan remains susceptible to natural disasters, extreme weather patterns and pandemics.

Prices for basic food goods have risen sharply in 2010 and are expected to increase even more in 2011 as a result of the summer 2010 flooding in Pakistan (from where much of Afghanistan's commodity supplies are imported) and a reduction in exportable wheat from the Black Sea region producers. The overall price of cereals is still 24 percent higher than before the 2007/08 global food price crisis. The food security situation is likely to worsen during the winter 2011 lean season, which is expected to be more severe than in the preceding year.

In addition to food insecurity, malnutrition continues to be a serious and growing problem in Afghanistan. The number of people lacking the minimum daily caloric intake has steadily increased since 2005. An estimated 422 000 Afghan children are acutely malnourished, whereas chronic malnutrition affects another 2 910 000. As a result of poor dietary diversity and inadequate child feeding practices, approximately 75 percent of Afghan women

and children have some form of micronutrient deficiency. More than one-third of Afghan children under the age of five are underweight and more than half experience stunting. Poor access to basic services such as primary health care, clean water, and sanitation facilities exacerbates the situation.

FAO response

As the co-lead of the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster as well as the Nutrition Cluster, FAO has prepared an integrated package of programme responses aimed at raising agricultural productivity and resilience to shocks.

The distribution of seed and fertilizer is expected to facilitate the immediate resumption of wheat and vegetable planting for 40 000 disaster-affected farming families. FAO aims to provide animal feed and veterinary services to an additional 40 000 rural households in order to protect livestock assets and increase income-generating activities. Access to agricultural inputs and improved practices such as crop rotation and diversification will enable vulnerable rural households of Afghanistan to better cope with agricultural shocks. FAO also aims to support local food production through the promotion of vegetable gardens and the provision of training, especially to pregnant and lactating mothers, in household gardening and nutrition. More than 100 000 people stand to benefit from increased access to locally grown fresh vegetables and improved nutrition awareness.

FAO has also positioned itself to create an inclusive national coordination mechanism that ensures a well-coordinated, coherent, strategic and effective food security and agriculture assistance programme to address the short-, medium-, and long-term challenges of achieving sustainable food security in Afghanistan.



PROPOSALS: FAO EMERGENCY AND REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE

Total funding requested: USD 25 906 848

Immediate support to vulnerable populations in flood-affected and food-insecure areas of Afghanistan through the provision of basic agricultural packages for autumn 2011 and spring 2012 planting seasons	
Objectives:	To boost the food security of flood-affected and food-insecure communities for the spring/autumn 2011 and spring 2012 planting seasons through the provision of improved wheat seed, fertilizer and diversification of agricultural livelihoods.
Activities:	Distribute approximately 2 000 tonnes of certified wheat seed, 2 000 tonnes of DAP fertilizer and 4 000 tonnes of urea fertilizer along with kitchen garden vegetable seed kits to 40 000 farming families who have no wheat or vegetable seed for the autumn 2011 and spring 2012 planting seasons; strengthen agricultural livelihoods development at community level through community-driven microprojects, to be implemented via a co-payment/reimbursement scheme in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) and target communities, in order to ensure that vulnerable communities participate and also focus on coping mechanisms and exit strategies that stimulate a move towards sustainability; and assist the most vulnerable farming families, including female-headed households, returnees and IDPs through technical training and marketing.
Beneficiaries:	40 000 vulnerable farming families.
Implementing partners:	MAIL, international and national NGOs.
Duration:	February – December 2011.
Funds requested:	USD 11 771 540.

Strengthening agriculture-based livelihoods and food security of vulnerable, food-insecure farming families through the emergency provision of animal feed for the 2011 feeding seasons

Objectives:	To improve the food security of vulnerable livestock holders in flood-affected areas of Afghanistan through the provision of concentrate animal feed.
Activities:	Improve the food security of some 40 000 vulnerable rural livestock owning households in flood- and conflict-affected areas of Afghanistan through the provision of quality animal feed from winter 2010/11 to winter 2011/12; and distribute 8 000 tonnes of animal feed to 40 000 farming families.
Beneficiaries:	40 000 vulnerable farming families.
Implementing partners:	MAIL, international and national NGOs.
Duration:	January – December 2011.
Funds requested:	USD 11 846 340.

Prevention of deterioration of malnutrition through the promotion of local food products

Objectives:	To promote the use of local foods to minimize the nutritional impact, and provide support to restore people's food production as a response to the increased nutritional vulnerability owing to natural disasters and political emergencies in Afghanistan.
Activities:	Promote vegetable gardening to increase families' access to fresh vegetables; increase the capacity of relevant government staff and NGOs by providing training in nutrition and gardening; provide nutrition counselling to improve nutrition awareness on complementary feeding and nutrition of lactating and pregnant mothers; organize participatory cooking sessions to improve families' nutrition practices using locally available food resources; increase household capacity in fruit and vegetable processing to minimize post-harvest losses and to support family dietary diversification especially in the off-seasons; produce communication tools to promote community ownership on preventive nutrition activities using local resources; and monitor and evaluate.
Beneficiaries:	110 000 chronically vulnerable people (including 36 740 children and 22 000 women).
Implementing partners:	MAIL - Women Extension Department, MoPH, Nutrition Cluster partners.
Duration:	January – December 2011.
Funds requested:	USD 1 095 248.

Strengthening Food Security and Agriculture Cluster coordination, strategic planning and information management in Afghanistan

Objectives:	To create an inclusive national coordination mechanism that ensures a well-coordinated, coherent, strategic and effective food security and agriculture assistance programme to address the short-, medium- and long-term challenges of achieving sustainable food security in Afghanistan.
Activities:	Ensure the maintenance of appropriate Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) coordination mechanisms; actively promote NGO inclusion in the FSAC by creating an enabling environment for their participation; ensure full integration of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's agreed priority, cross-cutting issues, namely human rights, HIV/AIDS, age, gender and the environment, using participatory and community-based approaches; promote gender equality by ensuring that the needs, contributions and capacities of women and girls, as well as of men and boys, will be addressed; secure commitments from Cluster participants in responding to needs and filling gaps, ensuring an appropriate distribution of responsibilities within the Cluster, with clearly defined focal points for specific issues, where necessary; ensure that participants within the FSAC work collectively, ensuring the complementarity of various stakeholders' actions; promote emergency response actions, while at the same time considering the need for early recovery planning as well as contingency planning, disaster prevention and risk reduction/management concerns; act as focal point for inquiries on the FSAC's response plans and operations; ensure timely, effective and coordinated food security and agricultural responses based on participatory and community-based approaches.
Beneficiaries:	FSAC partners, the Government, the humanitarian community and poor, food-insecure and vulnerable crisis-affected households.
Implementing partners:	N/A.
Duration:	January – December 2011.
Funds requested:	USD 1 193 720.